2007-05359/

NEWSRELEASE

September 29, 2004

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TOP PRIORITY FOR MINISTER PUPATELLO AT FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL MEETING

TORONTO – Sandra Pupatello, the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, will address the problem of domestic violence in our communities during this week's federal/provincial/territorial meeting of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women.

"In Ontario, we're committed to tackling domestic violence and developing a long-term approach to better protect women and their children," said Pupatello. "Domestic violence is an issue that affects every single community across this country."

The federal/provincial/territorial meeting is being held in St. John's, Newfoundland, from September 29 to October 1, 2004, and will be attended by Liza Frulla, the federal Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and other provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the women's portfolio.

Pupatello will discuss issues related to violence against women and children along with the importance of economic independence for women fleeing violent situations.

"When women and children live in fear in their own homes, we all suffer," said Pupatello. "Only when they get the help they need to escape violence in their homes, and only when they get the supports they need to become self-sufficient, will we be able to build communities where we can all feel safe."

In April, Premier Dalton McGuinty introduced the first steps in the government's long-term action plan to fight domestic violence. The plan includes:

- $3.5 million in additional funding to create housing supports for abused women and their children
- $4.9 million for a four-year public education campaign to mobilize communities to break the cycle of violence
- Improved training for police officers, crown attorneys and others working in the criminal justice system.

The government has also announced an additional $3 million this year to boost support for community agencies that provide shelter and counseling services to women and their children escaping violence.

"This issue is at the top of our list of priorities," said Pupatello. "I look forward to working with my federal, provincial and territorial counterparts to share practices and to consider cross-jurisdictional solutions."

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